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# THE HISTORY AND AIMS OF THE P.N.E.U.

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(Secretary at the House of Education).



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## THE HISTORY AND AIMS OF THE P.N.E.U.

THE following account of the early history and aims of a movement which is perhaps unique in the history of education, has been compiled from papers written at one time or another by our founder. The use, therefore, of "I" and "we" refers in every case to our founder, except where stated to the contrary.

"Oh that children were born without parents!" I once heard a successful schoolmaster exclaim, and he expressed what was a pretty general feeling when the Parents' Union began its work. We do not say that we have "changed all that." The existence of a society, which would have been a Utopian dream to earlier educators, is in itself a sign of the times. Were it not for the great spread of education in the last two or three decades we should not now have a generation of parents keenly aware of individual insufficiency for so momentous a task as the bringing up of a human being to be his best physically, mentally, morally, religiously. The possibilities and the limitations of education are recognized by parents as they never were before, and they welcome a society which approaches education from the stand-point of the formation of character and which offers two or three general principles for their guidance.

Thoughtful parents are, we believe, often troubled by a sense of distressing vagueness as to their complete duty. They have received many counsels, often contradictory; they are told to do this and leave the other undone, to do the other and leave this undone, but they have not found it easy to arrive at the few guiding illuminating principles which should give unity and method to all they do. The Parents' Union is not merely a society for mutual co-operation and help, but exists before all things for the promulgation of two or three vital educational principles. The value of these principles has been abundantly and variously tested during the last twelve years and parents have found in them a sort of leverage of which they had felt the want. But the best way to understand a movement is to trace it from the beginning.

Our founder writes, "Some years ago before the P.N.E.U. was thought of and in giving lectures to ladies preparing to teach in elementary schools, the extraordinary leverage which some knowledge of the principles of physiological-psychology gives to those who have the bringing-up of children, was brought home to me. Enthusiasm, vitality, success, came of definite aim, and the clear perception of means to an end. During the following years, years of educational work, literary and other, a single idea was gradually taking shape and forcing itself into prominence, becoming, in fact, a life-purpose. To put it in the tentative form in which it then occurred. What if these two or three vitalizing educational principles could be brought before parents? Ah, what indeed! But, the question remained, how to approach parents without appearance of presumption. How could we, with sincere deference and humility, offer to parents the help of those few principles which seemed a very gospel of education, so far depending upon scientific discovery, that only within the last few decades has it been an open book."

At last the occasion arrived and simmering thought took shape. The desire to help in a parochial effort led to the delivery of a short course of lectures to ladies on home education in the winter of 1885, in Bradford. These were published in 1886 under the title of *Home Education* and thenceforth the ball was in motion. Colleagues gathered, among the first and most inspiring our "Aunt Mai." We felt that all social advances, from the Christian church downwards, were made by means of propagandist societies. We must have such a society—of *parents*. A few of us resolved ourselves into a committee, and just before the summer holidays in 1887 we met in "Aunt Mai's" drawing-room to discuss a syllabus I had drawn up for a Parents' Educational Union. The original scheme on a simple sheet of foolscap is still in existence. The "Central Principles" and the "Objects"—the backbone of our Society—are there almost intact, though they were later subjected to much discussion and revision and the syllabus contains in germ almost every detail of the work as now carried on.

"There were only about a dozen present, and of these all were not clear as to what was intended. Had the scheme



anything to do with refuge work, or was it intended to better the teaching in elementary schools, or to supplement the good work done in the cause of secondary education, are questions that appeared to be simmering in the minds of some of those present. It was hazarded that the education of parents was the object of the society, a suggestion which did more than touch the truth, but which met with a disclaimer all the same; because a proposal to educate parents sounds a little like an offer to teach the doctors—to the non-parent, at any rate, who has a great respect for parents, *per se*.

"In the course of discussion it became clear that the object of the society was the study of the Laws of Education, as they bear on the bodily development, the moral training, the intellectual work, and the religious bringing up of children. The phrase 'Laws of Education' probably struck some of us as a mere *façon de parler*, but it passed without question.

"Next, the conditions of membership were discussed. Parents, of whatever class, should be eligible as members. This was an improvement on the original idea, which included mothers only; but a father amongst us exclaimed against this: fathers, he said, must share with mothers the responsibility of bringing up children, and what is to be of use to the one should help the other also. Certainly the society must gain in vigour and power by the inclusion of fathers, so the suggestion was adopted joyfully. The most desirable members are young, earnest-minded people, full of purpose for their children. These are, no doubt, the very persons most likely to bring up their children well; but it is a case of 'Unto him that hath shall be given'; and in an attempt to educate public opinion, one of the objects of the society, it is a great thing to have the best on our side. The practical wisdom of experienced parents, on the other hand, should be of the greatest service to the rest; and, besides parents, other persons interested in education should be useful allies, if only on the principle that lookers-on see *much* of the game. An important section of the society includes parents of the artisan class. Here we want, not the comfortable dames who have time to attend Mothers' Meetings because their children are out of hand, but young people with their children about them, of intelligence enough from

their school training to profit by some insight into the principles of education. We should hope to touch less capable parents indirectly; there is a good deal of community in cottage life, and one carefully brought-up family in a row of houses must have its effect on the rest.

"After the preliminary details, some of us were still in the condition of little Peterkin in the poem, we wondered 'what 'twas all about'—what practical work is our society to accomplish? Bearing in mind that our object is to bring common thought on the subject of education to the level of scientific research, the question is how to give parents grip of the enormous leverage offered by some half-dozen physiological and psychological truths.

"To this end we propose to hold meetings—say four—during the winter session, with a definite programme of subjects for discussion; if the four parts of education—physical, mental, moral, and religious—can be taken up consecutively, so much the better; the topic for the day to be ventilated by means of an original paper or other reading, to be followed by discussions. And because these are topics in which every one present will have a vivid personal interest, and upon which every thinking person must at some time have thought, we expect such discussion to be both lively and profitable. Here we have a modest programme of work for the winter meetings of the Union.

"A little Parents' Educational Union work remains to be done in the summer months. Children under nine should get the more valuable part of their education in the open air. They should be on speaking terms with every sort of natural object to be met within miles of their homes. Scientific knowledge is not wanted at this stage, but what Professor Huxley calls 'common information,' which, by the way, is not too common. It is from his parents the child must get this *real* knowledge. We all know how eagerly every child takes to the lore of the fields—but how shall we tell what we don't know, and do we not all wish we knew more of this sort of thing? Here is more work for the society. A couple of field excursions every year under the lead of a naturalist, with opportunities for asking questions, note-book and blotting-pads for specimens, should give us at least a score or two of new acquaintances every



year, and, what is more, should initiate us into the art of seeing—both communicable possessions, to be passed on to the children.

"This is, roughly, our programme for our first year. We may see our way to more work than we pledge ourselves to. For instance, we may set on foot work under an examination scheme, in the case of parents or others being found willing to undertake a definite course of reading in education and its kindred sciences with a view to examination. Further delightful visions loom in the distance—hardly yet within measurable distance. We may live as a society to see ourselves possessed of an educational lending library; may see the issue of an educational magazine, which should make our work easy; and who knows but what some mothers amongst us may live to engage ladies from a training-college, where women of some cultivation are taught the natural laws in obedience to which a child grows up healthy, happy, intelligent, and good? More, may we hope to see the day when no mother will engage a governess, however 'nice,' or however accomplished, who has not been duly trained in the art and instructed in the science of education. We commend the society to you, with every hope that it will thrive. That such a society should be of use goes without saying—therefore we believe it will be fostered, for most of us are of Matthew Arnold's mind, that the best thing worth living for is 'to be of use.' No doubt the working of the society will demand some power, moral and intellectual, as well as goodwill; but, happily, there is no lack of power among us, so that need be no stumbling-block.

"May I propose to you two ideas to the working out of which it seems to me well worth while that our society should devote itself: (a) That the forming of habits is a great part of education; (b) that body, mind, soul, and spirit, equally, live upon food, and perish of famine; all four require *daily* bread; all thrive as they work, and degenerate in idleness. That I am using a popular rather than a scientific description of man does not matter; we all know that our needs and our activities are of four sorts, and this is enough for our present purpose.

"*Whose we are and whom we serve.* Here we have at once the motive and the safeguard of parents. An attempt to bring up

children on scientific principles alone may produce splendid results in literature, science, even in virtue; but by-and-by, there is evidence of a leak somewhere, threatening to sink the ship. Startling illustrations will occur to us all. On the other hand, who wilfully ignores the laws which regulate activity and development in every part of our being, is like him who puts to sea without rudder or compass, trusting to the winds of heaven to carry him where he would go. *Whose we are*—let us make the most and best of our children; *Whom we serve*—in order that their service may be of the worthiest."

Later in the year 1887, about 200 cards were sent inviting people to the first meeting of the Parents' Educational Union to hear the inaugural address which has just been read. The meeting, held in the hall of the Bradford Grammar School, was largely attended and 80 members were enrolled on the first day. To quote from the report of this meeting:—"The idea of the establishment of this society jumped with popular feeling. The scope and methods of the Union remain practically as in the original forecast. The society is deeply indebted to the judgment and earnest efforts of men of thought and culture.

"The question of class legislation caused some perplexity in the first instance. It was felt that while here was common ground on which the rich and poor should meet together, yet, on the other hand, the *details* of home training and culture are not the same for people who have nurseries and artistic surroundings and for those whose lot is cast within narrower lines. But the difficulty settled itself; it was found that, to meet the artisan class it is desirable to go to their usual places of meeting, and to work through existing organizations rather than to press another society on their attention. Work in mothers' unions, guilds, temperance halls, &c., is incumbent on every branch."

In the second session, 1888-1889, the number of members was more than doubled and the winter's work proved very bright and successful. It included:—

(a) Four meetings of members addressed by Mrs Boyd Carpenter (our local President), Dr. Hime, the late Bishop of Wakefield, the Countess of Aberdeen, whose question "When shall I get a governess to carry out the principles of *Home*



*Education?* may have had something to do with the forming of the House of Education.

- (b) Four working mothers' meetings.
- (c) Two mixed parents' meetings.
- (d) Three meetings for nursemaids.

Besides these distinctly P.E.U. meetings, various parish "mothers' meetings" and "womens' guilds" have been addressed on matters connected with sanitation and moral and religious training.

Of the year 1888 our Founder writes:—"After a year's very prosperous work in Bradford, it was felt that the idea of the society had justified itself and that it might be safely brought before a wider public. Before attempting to spread the society I took counsel with a large number of persons, who appeared to me to be leaders of thought; such as the then Bishop of London (the present Primate), the Rev. J. C. Welldon (present Bishop of Calcutta), Miss Beale (Head of Ladies' College, Cheltenham), Miss Buss, Sir J. Fitch, Professor Sully, Canon Liddon, Miss Clough and many others. I wrote at considerable length to each of these, explaining the principles and methods of the proposed Parents' Union, which indeed, was already in operation and doing good work in one locality. Opinions and criticisms were invited and were, in every case, freely and cordially given; and perhaps it is to this thorough thrashing out in the first place we owe the fact that the P.N.E.U. has worked ever since with hardly a hitch."

In 1888 the pamphlet, oddly called the Draft-proof, was printed, and the following preliminary considerations which originally led to the formation of the society were sown broadcast:—

"No other part of the world's work is of such supreme difficulty, delicacy and importance, as that of parents in the right bringing up of their children. The first obligation of the present—that of passing forward a generation better than ourselves—rests with parents. As every child belongs to the Commonweal, so his bringing up is the concern of all. Yet parents, with the responsibility of the world's future resting upon them, are left to do their work, each father and mother alone, rarely getting so much as a word of sympathy, counsel, or encouragement. All other bodies of workers, whether of hand or brain, enjoy the help and profit of association;

commonly, of co-operation. Thus the wisdom, the experience, the information of each is made profitable for all; enthusiasm is generated by the union of many for the advance of a cause, and every member is cheered by the sympathy of his fellow-workers. More, association makes it possible to organize means of instruction—lectures, libraries, classes, journals, etc. It creates an ever higher public opinion, which puts down casual, uninstructed work, and sets a premium on good work, and it gives an impetus to steady progress as opposed to spasmodic efforts. But parents are outside of all this. They, who must do the vital part of the world's work, compare at a disadvantage with all other skilled workers, whether of hand or brain. There is a literature of its own for almost every craft and profession; while you may count on the fingers of one hand the scientific works on early training plain and practical enough to be of use to parents. There are no colleges, associations, classes, lectures for parents, or those of an age to become parents; no register of the discoveries—physical or psychological—in child-nature, which should make education a light task; no record of successful treatment of the sullen, the heedless, the disobedient child; none of the experience of wise parents; there is hardly a standard of beautiful child-life (reduced to words, that is,) towards which parents can work.\* There is little means of raising public opinion on the subject of home training, or of bringing such opinion to bear. Every young mother must begin at the beginning to work out for herself the problems of education, with no more than often misleading traditions for her guidance. One reason for this anomaly is, that the home is a sanctuary, where prying and intermeddling from without would be intolerable; and, without doubt, the practices of each home are sacred matters between each family and Him who maketh men to be of one mind in a house. But the *principles* of early training are another matter, there is no more helpful work to be done than to bring these principles to the doors of parents of whatever degree.

"How cordially parents welcome any effort in this direction one has but to try to be convinced. There is a feeling abroad that it does not do to bring up children casually; that

\* It is interesting to notice how much of this statement is already ancient history. [Ed.]



there are certain natural laws—better named Divine laws—which must be worked out in order to produce human beings at their best, in body, mind, moral nature, and spiritual power. It is no easy matter to get at these laws, and here is where parents demand thorough ventilation, at least, of the questions that concern them. For people are beginning to perceive how lamentable and how universal are the miseries arising from *defective education*; the over active brain, the narrow chest, the sullen and resentful temper, the sluggish intellect are often, more or less, the results of faulty education: the tendency may have been born with the child, but education is able to deal with tendencies. Most of us are aware of some infirmity of flesh or spirit, a life-long stumbling-block, which might have been easily cured in our childhood. It is not too much to say that, in the light of advancing science, many of the infirmities that beset us, whether of heart, intellect, or temper, are the results of defective education.

“‘The training of children,’ says Mr. Herbert Spencer, ‘physical, moral, and intellectual, is dreadfully *defective*. And in great measure it is so because parents are devoid of that knowledge by which alone this training can be rightly guided. . . . Some acquaintance with the principles of physiology and the elementary truths of psychology is indispensable for the right bringing up of children.’ These two sciences have been making steady advances since the writing of those weighty words. This is, shortly, where we are to-day: the principle which underlies the *possibility* of all education is discovered to us: we are taught that the human frame, brain as well as muscle, *grows to the uses it is earliest put to*. It is hardly possible to get beyond the ground covered by this simple-sounding axiom; that is, it is hardly open to us to overstate the possibilities of education. Almost anything may be made of a child by those who first get him into their hands. We find that we can work definitely towards the formation of character; that the *habits* of the good life, of the alert intelligence, which we take pains to form in the child, are, somehow, registered in the very substance of his brain; and that the habits of the child are, as it were, so many little hammers beating out by slow degrees the character of the man. Therefore we set ourselves to form a

habit in the same matter-of-fact steady way that we set about teaching the multiplication table; expecting the thing to be done and done with for life. But fitful efforts after a habit—say, of tidiness, or of obedience—are of very little use, and are worrying to child and parents.

“But this doctrine of habit, all important as it is, includes no more than a third part of the ground covered by education. Parents are very jealous over the individuality of their children; they mistrust the tendency to develop all on the same plan, and this instinctive jealousy is right, for supposing that education really did consist in systematized effort to draw out every power that is in children, all must needs develop on the same lines. Some of us have an uneasy sense that things are tending towards this deadly sameness. But, indeed, the fear is groundless. We may rest assured that the personality, the individuality of each of us is too dear to God, and too necessary to a complete humanity, to be left at the mercy of empirics.

“The problem of education is more complex than it seems at first sight, and well for us and the world that it is so. ‘Education is a life’; you may stunt, and starve, and kill, or you may cherish and sustain; but the beating of the heart, the movement of the lungs, and the development of the ‘faculties’ are only indirectly our care.

“The happy phrase of Mr. Matthew Arnold—which we have appropriated as the motto of the *Parents’ Review*—is, perhaps, the most complete and adequate definition of education we possess. It is a great thing to have said ‘Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life’; and our wiser posterity may see in that ‘profound and exquisite remark’ the fruition of a lifetime of critical effort. It covers the question from the three conceivable points of view. Subjectively, in the child, education is a life; objectively as affecting the child, education is a discipline; relatively, if we may introduce a third term, as regards the environment of the child, education is an atmosphere.

“The whole subject is profound, but as practical as it is profound. We absolutely must disabuse our minds of the theory that the functions of education are, in the main, gymnastic. In the early years of the child’s life it makes, perhaps, little apparent difference whether his parents start



with the notion that to educate is to fill a receptacle, inscribe a tablet, mould plastic matter, or, *nourish a life*; but in the end we shall find that only those *ideas* which have fed his life are taken into the being of the child; all else is thrown away, or worse, is an impediment and an injury to the vital processes.

"This is, perhaps, how the educational formula should run; education is a life; all life must have its appropriate nourishment, as the bodily life is sustained on bread, so is the spiritual life on *ideas*; and it is the duty of parents to sustain a child's inner life with ideas as they sustain its body with food. The child is an eclectic; he may choose this or that; therefore, in the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

"The child has affinities with evil as well as with good; therefore, hedge him about from any chance lodgment of evil suggestion.

"The initial idea begets subsequent ideas; therefore, take care that children get right primary ideas on the great relations and duties of life.

"Every study, every line of thought, has its 'guiding idea'; therefore the study of a child makes for living education, as it is quickened by the guiding idea which 'stands at the head.'

"In a word, our much boasted 'infallible reason'—is it not the involuntary thought which follows the initial idea upon necessary, logical lines? Given, the starting idea, and the conclusion may be predicated almost to a certainty. We get into the *way* of thinking such and such manner of thoughts, and of coming to such and such conclusions, ever further and further removed from the starting-point, but on the same lines. There is structural adaptation in the brain tissue to the manner of thoughts we think—a place and a way for them to run in. Thus we see how the destiny of a life is shaped in the nursery, by the reverent naming of the Divine Name; by the light scoff at holy things; by the thought of duty the little child gets who is made to finish conscientiously his little task; by the hardness of heart that comes to the child who hears the faults or sorrows of others spoken of lightly."

On January 18th, 1890, the rules and constitution of the P.N.E.U. were drawn up by the Executive Committee at a meeting held in the Graham Street High School. The central principles and objects as originally drawn up were adopted, and on the February 18th were finally discussed in a long and earnest debate in the presence of some leading educationalists in the hall of the College of Preceptors, and the result was the principles and objects of the Union in their present and final form.

The Society struggled into birth without its own magazine, but it was felt, in very early days, that such a society, without an inspiring organ, would be a mere tool to the hand of every educational faddist who had a theory to advance. Now the P.N.E.U. owes its vitality to the fact that it is a propagandist society, existing to disseminate certain educational principles. Such a society must obviously have the means of communicating, month by month, with its scattered members, must guide the progress of the movement towards the end in view.

How to launch a worthy magazine was the question. We had amongst us but very few enthusiasts willing and able to risk capital in a costly and hazardous enterprise. A high-class educational magazine appealing to a public of parents, not in the least "popular," limited by the nature of its contents to educated and really earnest readers, would seem fore-doomed to failure. One influential friend to the cause opposed our efforts on the ground that "it will bring you to the workhouse and I won't come and see you there." However, obstacles were overcome, personal friends came to the help of educational allies, a sufficient fund was raised to carry the *Parents' Review* through over four years of its existence, during which the sales did not yet cover the costs of production. In these doubtful days our friends made valiant efforts; the *Review* was spread from hand to hand; a second small fund was raised at a distressful juncture; the publishers wondered at the enthusiasm of the subscribers; and now, our anxious days are over, we have turned the corner, the *Review* is self-supporting, is in a position to help the Society and we hope to pay some small interest on sunk capital to those generous friends who supported what appeared to be a hopeless cause. We take this opportunity



of expressing our profound gratitude to these, and to those equally valuable friends among our subscribers who, from the very beginning, have laboured ceaselessly to spread the *Parents' Review*, and with it the knowledge of our principles and our work.

A few words from the "Dedication" to the first number of the *Review*, February, 1890, will serve to indicate its original aim.

"The *Parents' Review* is dedicated, with great deference, and with a strong assurance of their warm sympathy and support, to parents. The efforts which the Editor has already made to elucidate the problems which press upon the attention of parents have met with such an extraordinary response as to convince her that there is an imperative and immediate demand for a literary organ devoted to their interests. . . .

"In these and other respects, the aim of the *Parents' Review* is to raise common thought on the subject of education to the level of scientific research, and to give parents grip of some half-dozen principles which should act as enormously powerful levers in the elevation of character.

"The object of this monthly magazine is to keep parents in touch with the best and latest thought on all those matters connected with the training and culture of children and young people which do not fall within the school curriculum."

How one remembers the "fearful joy" of the first number of P.R., what it was to fetch it from the publishers at the moment of issue, to carry it to the nearest A.B.C. shop, to ponder its pages and its cover and the *tout ensemble* of the (then) greeny-yellow magazine, now with joy, now with anxiety, now with doubt, again with rejoicing! Would it prove to be still-born? Was there the least chance in the world that so new a venture in Magazine literature would find a public? Those were intense moments, and not less intense were the months of incubation.

In March, 1890, the first Annual Meeting was announced in the *Review*, to take place on June 3rd, with the accompanying editorial note:—

"We hope that many of our readers will make a point of attending, that they may hear the objects and methods of the Parents' National Educational Union fully set forth, and may learn how simple a matter it is to establish a 'Branch' in any neighbourhood.

"The object of the promoters is to overspread the country with a great national educational league of parents of every condition; and thus to testify that parents form an educational body, whose regard for the interests of the children is as intelligent as it is profound.

"The strength of our position lies in the word *body*. The good and great amongst us show what great things individual parents have done and are doing. But the duty of even the best parents does not end with their own children; there are certain duties of fellowship of calling, recognized, perhaps, in every vocation but that of the parent. The clergyman owns responsibilities to his brother clergy; the doctor, the artist, the army man, above all, the teacher, profits by free give and take with the members of his profession; the parent, alone, stands aloof, as one who should say, 'I have nothing to give and nothing to get; I am sufficient unto myself.' This aloofness of parents is hardly intentional; it is a mere relic of the sentiment of our barbarian days, the feeling we express in the saying, 'The Englishman's house is his castle.' We are waking up to the fact that, by this exclusion and seclusion we sustain a great national and personal loss; we lose much of the enthusiasm which kindles with the consciousness that many are striving together in a great cause.

"It is no arbitrary reward which is attached to the assembling of two or three together; we warm ourselves at each others' fires, and glow with the heat we get. Let but the heads of two or three families meet together to talk over the bringing up of their children, and the best and wisest parents will go home with new insight, renewed purpose, and warmer zeal.

"We shall learn by degrees that education is, like religion, a social principle as well as an individual duty; and, meeting on this higher ground, we shall find out the best of one another as we never should in the common intercourse of business or society."

The First Annual Meeting of the Parents' National Educational Union was held at London House on Tuesday, June 3rd, 1890, the Bishop of London presiding.

After a few words of prayer, the chairman said: I suppose every one in the room knows the purpose of the Association which is holding its meeting here to-day quite as well as I do who am taking the chair. I do not profess to have studied



the various means which may be used for promoting that purpose. The purpose appears to me one of very great importance indeed for the whole community, for the purpose of this Association is to improve generally the way of bringing up children. We are quite satisfied there is a great deal still to be learned on this subject. A great deal more might be done to prepare children for the life which they have to live afterwards, and that preparation ought to be begun from their very earliest years. We are satisfied that parents generally would be very much better able to discharge their important duties if they considered the subject a great deal more, or if they would make use of the experience of those who have already considered it. The fact is, children are very often brought up in a hap-hazard kind of way, and that elementary rule which St. Paul lays down when he bids "Fathers to provoke not their children," needs a great deal more inculcation than it has yet received. Parents are not fully aware how much mischief may be done in indulging in temper in the treatment of their children, nor of the need for a fuller knowledge of the characters of children. I have had a great deal to do with the education of boys going to college, and now that I am grown older, I have the education of my own little boys in the very earliest years. I cannot help feeling very often that it would be better for us if we knew a great deal more than we do about the way of forming in them the habit of obedience, and of teaching them to control their tempers and their impulses. The fact is that parents as a rule know nothing about it at all until they have it put upon them. Of course, it is quite true that by God's merciful providence the affection between children and parents is by nature so exceedingly strong that parents do succeed, if without very much instruction, in making their children feel that they are loved and love them in return. The object of this Society is to spread as widely as we possibly can a general knowledge of what is involved in the education of children; to incite parents generally to understand the matter for themselves, and to supply what those who have made a special study of education have decided upon as being best. And we believe that we can in this way encourage parents generally to give their minds to the matter, so that in the course of two or three generations, a very great difference

may be made in what may be called the public opinion of the parents. The parents, besides having their children actually in their hands for a certain time, have to choose the schools where they are to be sent. They do not always understand on what principles it is wise to choose. If we can create a more general appreciation of what is a good school and what is not, I think all education would gain very much by it. I put before you these brief outlines of the Society, and will ask those who have had the matter more in their hands to set before you in detail what is proposed to be done.

Canon Daniel proceeded to move the first resolution. It may be desirable, he said, that I should say a few words with regard to the object of this Union. The main object cannot be stated in better words than those already employed by your lordship, namely, to help parents in bringing up their children. That is a very wide expression, and is intended to cover a great deal more than is ordinarily understood by education. Those interested in the formation of this Union felt that the so-called school is only one of a large number of schools, of which the most important is home, and that the so-called teacher is only one of a large army of teachers, the most important of which is the parent. Home education must precede school education, go on concurrently with it, and follow it. It is obviously of the greatest importance that a child's education should be characterized throughout by unity of aim, so that there may be no waste of effort. One great endeavour of the Union will be to secure both unity and continuity of education by getting parents and teachers to act on common principles. The great work of education is not to be carried on entirely by deputy. The most judicious and faithful of servants cannot do all that a parent would do. The most careful teacher will not see to many little points of conduct to which a parent would very properly attach great importance. The question arises, Is this Union needed? Will not the British public regard with a jealous eye another new Association? If the work has already been well done why call into existence a special society for its promotion? There are enough demands upon our time and our money, it may be said, why burden us needlessly with more? In reply, I would say that parents at present are often very ill-prepared for the



serious duties that devolve upon them. Herbert Spencer, in his famous Essay upon Education, said that of the various activities of life for which education prepares us, those connected with the responsibilities of parents were the most neglected, and I do not think we have advanced very far in improving matters since that opinion was expressed. We do not instruct young people at school to any very great extent in the laws of either mind or body, and yet, immediately you begin to educate or bring up children (I will use that in preference), it becomes necessary to know something of the laws of child-nature. If you do not know those laws you are liable to violate them; instead of having Nature with you you may have Nature against you. I do not think we can trust to traditional practice in this matter. People say, "Surely all parents when they come to have children of their own find sufficient guidance in the practice of their early homes." I admit that it is an enormous advantage to be able to fall back upon the precepts and examples of good parents. An American writer says, "If you wish to be a good man or good woman, select good parents," but I do not think that the example of good and wise parents is quite enough. Education has quietly advanced both as a science and an art during the last quarter of a century. Psychologists have paid particular attention to the laws of the child's mind; medical men have paid particular attention to the laws of the child's body. Educational doctrines have been gathered together from all quarters, and it is thought, not unreasonably, that parents ought to some extent to be put in possession of these. I have heard it objected that this society would foster "amateurishness" in education. I do not know exactly what that means; I presume that the objection contains a latent reference to that little knowledge which is a dangerous thing. I admit it might be possible for parents to do a great deal of harm, if with very imperfect knowledge, they set up to devise schemes of education for themselves. My best answer to this objection is Mr. Thring's parody on the lines of Pope, which embody it—

"A little money is a dangerous snare;  
Get thousands, but of sixpences beware."

Thousands begin with sixpence, much knowledge begins with small knowledge, and much useful knowledge may be put into

very small compass. Of course the knowledge which some people possess on this subject of education is very profound, and both our objects and the modes we propose to employ may incur their contempt, but I think we can outlive their satire and criticisms. I have also heard it said that we should trust more largely to what a great physician called "healthy neglect." Is it necessary, it is asked, to take such extreme care of children? Is it not enough for parents to provide them with proper food and clothing and send them to proper schools? Why should we take all these pains to regulate their health, form their habits, and cultivate their tastes? I believe to some extent in "healthy neglect," but it must be healthy. Certainly, simple neglect has been tried on a very wide scale, and I think we shall agree the results have not been wholly satisfactory. Wordsworth speaks of a "wise passiveness" in education, and undoubtedly there is room for such a thing, but there is a good deal of passiveness that is not wise but otherwise. I think we shall do parents a vast amount of good if we can arouse in their minds a sense of the wide reach of education, deepen in them a sense of their responsibility. Now what is the method which this Union proposes to pursue for the attainment of its objects? It is the diffusion of information. That we shall seek to accomplish in various ways, by lectures, by gatherings of parents in which educational subjects are discussed, and very largely by the Press. It is proposed that Local Branches of the Union shall be established in places sufficiently populous, and that parents should be brought together, of different classes and both sexes, for the consideration of the questions in which they are so deeply interested. It is hoped that persons familiar with the education of children will show how home can best co-operate with school, and that medical men will occasionally give addresses to parents bearing upon physical education. With regard to the history of this movement, it largely owes its conception and inception to Miss Charlotte Mason, who began the movement at Bradford by establishing a small local Union which, I believe, has done a great deal of good there. Accounts of her work spread, and she has been invited to help in the establishment of similar Unions in other places. It seemed desirable that London should be made the headquarters of the movement, and that



a committee should be formed in London for the purpose of organizing the movement.

In September, 1890, arrangements were made for an organizing tour beginning at Sheffield, working southward through Cambridge to the coast, crossing country by way of Cheltenham and working northwards again by Birmingham and Wolverhampton. Meetings were held at Scarborough, Bangor, Llandudno, Llanfairfechan, Sheffield, Grantham, Reading, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Clifton (Bristol), Wolverhampton, Altrincham and Kendal. By December Branches at Belgravia, Forest Gate, Hampstead and St. John's Wood, Bournemouth, Bradford, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Grantham were formed, and by February, 1891, Branches at Sheffield, Altrincham, Bowdon and Kendal were added.

In January, 1891, the scheme for a House of Education was brought before the readers of the *Parents' Review*. To quote from the notice in the *Review*, "We shall invite women of some refinement and education to come to us for a year's training and they will leave us, we hope, with what we shall venture to call the 'enthusiasm of childhood.'"

In March, 1891, the following forecast of the House of Education, as issued in the "Draft-proof," appeared in the *Review*, and discussion was invited:—"There is a near prospect of a House of Education where young ladies who have left school, ladies proposing to teach in families shall be taught, (a), the laws of health; (b), the right ordering of a home schoolroom; (c), the principles which underlie the moral and mental growth of a child, and how to train him according to his nature; (d), the most rapid and rational methods of teaching; (e), and, especially, how to train a child's senses by means of out-of-door work, by teaching him to know, name and delight in natural objects." Of this month our founder writes, "I receive, perhaps, weekly applications, amounting to entreaties in their earnestness, for governesses."

In January, 1892, the House of Education was started in Ambleside. There had been some thought of training ladies as nurses as well as governesses, but this idea was never carried into effect, especially as this sort of work was taken up by the Norland Institute.

For further particulars of the House of Education may we refer to the Prospectus, the Reports each year, and the Conference Report of 1897.

In June, 1891, the *Parents' Review* School was introduced to the readers of the *Parents' Review* in an article from which the following is an extract:—"For lack of something analogous to school discipline in their early training children begin school at a disadvantage, they begin life at a disadvantage, and the world never gets the best of them. No school advantages can make up to a child for the scope for individual development he should find at home, under the direction of his parents, for the first eight or ten years of life. Later, sterner discipline, intellectual as well as physical, takes the field. The routine of the schoolroom is even more valuable than its teaching, and the virtues and habits of the communal life, the life of the citizen, are, perhaps, never so thoroughly acquired at home as at school. Exclusive home-training continued too long tends to exaggerated individuality, eccentricity; while school-life, begun too soon, tends to loss of original power and individual character. But, theory apart, this is what actually happens. Most children of the educated classes, boys and girls, get their early 'schooling' at home. The children of parents who live in the country, where good day-schools are unattainable, have no alternative. Girls of the professional class, living in the country, commonly get the whole of their 'schooling' at home. Girls of the highest class are rarely sent to school. We have not found ourselves able to give this kind of help to parents through the pages of the *Parents' Review*, because very mischievous results might follow from prescriptions of work being applied to children for whom they were totally unfitted. But we see a way, at last, to do what we have felt all along to be very important work. We propose to open a *Parents' Review* School. It shall be a unique school, for the pupils shall go to school and be taught at home at one and the same time and have the two-fold advantages of school discipline and home culture.

"There is no waste more sad than the waste of those early years when the child's curiosity is keen and his memory retentive, and when he might lay up a great store of knowledge of the world he lives in with pure delight to himself."

The *Parents' Review* School opened on June 15th, 1891. It is not necessary to say more of the school here, though we



may mention, perhaps, that over 300 children in all parts of the world are working happily in it. For further information may we refer to the Prospectus and other papers, and to the Conference Report for 1897.

In November, 1891 we gave a course of lectures to ladies on "The training of children" in London.

In December, 1891, another scheme was brought before our readers. Of this our Founder says:—"The writer of an article in the *Review* appealed to the students of the *Parents' Review*. We find that the feeling is gaining ground, that 'Education' demands more than mere reading; many mothers feel that they would be the better in body and mind for the mental activity that nothing but definite study affords and the time seems ripe for the carrying out of another item of our original programme, and we made arrangements for a course of study on Education—a three years' course—with questions."

In June, 1892 the Mothers' Educational Course was started. It provides for a definite course of study, covering the principles of, and suggesting good methods for, the physical, mental, moral and religious training of children. There are now (1899) about 80 mothers working in it. For further particulars may we refer to the Conference Report of 1897 and to the Prospectus.

The year 1892 was marked by the formation of the nucleus of good Educational Libraries at the Hampstead, Belgravia and Reading Branches, and of a Natural History Club at the Belgravia Branch.

In May, 1893, Aunt Mai's Budget was added to the *Parents' Review*, and it has proved a popular feature of our work with the children.

In the same year, with a view to concentration, it was determined that the P.N.E.U. should open a central office in London, to be managed by a secretary, and from which the *Review* should be published. This gave the Union a much-needed *pied-à-terre* in town.

The Natural History Club of the Belgravia Branch was taken over by the Central Office, and the First Annual Exhibition was held in November, 1893.

The Lending Library of the same Branch was also taken over by Central Committee, and it formed the nucleus of

what is now becoming a very complete Educational Library.

The year 1894 was one of equal progress in the two dimensions of breadth and depth. It saw the establishment of 13 new branches. As regards the second dimension, depth, the year was one of real growth. It was a time of sifting. Our principles were called into question, investigated, re-affirmed, and most cordially embraced by many who had, in the first instance, accepted them somewhat as a matter of course. We came out of rather painful experiences, strengthened and refreshed, with enthusiasm quickened, and numbers steadily increasing, and what is more, the addition of some of the most strenuous, enthusiastic, and successful workers on our executive committee. We owe a great deal to the unflagging labours of the sub-committee, who have had the constitution of the Society under thorough and greatly needed revision. The revised rules commend themselves to our members. The Central Principles and Objects of the Union remain, of course, intact.

In 1895 there were twenty-three Branches at work and four new Branches were formed. Natural History Clubs were started at Reading and Bedford.

In the year 1896 there were thirty-one Branches at work and fourteen in process of organization. Amongst the latter were Branches in Belgium, India and Natal.

In the year 1897 there were thirty-eight Branches at work and we had to record our First Annual Conference in place of the usual Annual Meeting, which gave great impetus to the internal growth of the Union.

1898. The report is in your hands.

During this present year (1899), letters have reached us from Holland, Japan, Russia and Australia, asking for the inauguration of P.N.E.U. work in those countries.

Here is promise for the future. Is the day arriving when our Society will be not only national but international, a bond of peace, progress, and goodwill between the nations? Our cause has adherents in almost every region of the known world, from Constantinople to Fiji, from Ceylon to Japan, and we believe that there is more in store for us. Such as these are the signs of hope and promise that come in our way. In 1892 a native Indian prince wrote for permission to have translations made into three native dialects of *Home*



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*Education*, which contains an outline of our principles and methods. In December, 1894, an eminent professor at the Sorbonne devoted a lecture, delivered at the great French University, to our work. He had taken pains to supply himself with material in the form of our annual Reports and specimen numbers of the *Review*. *M. le Professeur* writes of his "sentiments of respect and sympathy for our beautiful initiative," and considers that he has succeeded in making his public share in these sentiments.

The same month brought another letter from an Italian lady, an ardent educationalist. The Signoria de Agostina wrote, in fervent sympathy, of her intention to launch our ideas, through the medium of the Italian magazines, with the hope of forming Italian Branches of the P.N.E.U. Here, at home, there are countless towns and neighbourhoods ripe for the formation of Branches, and the question with us is, whom to send? An effort to organize work in Scotland had most cheering results, and many parts of Ireland are quite ready to take fire.

Life is more intense, more difficult, more exhausting for us than it was for our fathers; it will probably be more difficult still for our children than for ourselves. How timely, then, and how truly, as we say, providential, that just at this juncture of difficult living, certain simple, definite clues to the art of living should have been put into our hands. Is it presumptuous to hope that new life has been vouchsafed to us in these days, in response to our more earnest endeavour, our more passionate craving for "more light and fuller"? We look back at our small beginnings and thank God and take courage, for already we number our thousands. We have reason to congratulate ourselves and each other, but let us do so with diffidence. Success has its perils. May we each feel that we have a personal work to accomplish in connection with the Union; that each of us is a propagandist, upon whom rests the duty of spreading the principles which seem to us so full of light.